

Anti-war

Action Supplement

Due to the police raid on Cornerstone's Housing Co-op in Leeds, and the confiscation during this of parts of the printing press that the AU is printed on, this December/January issue has turned into an enlarged January/February one. Since so much recent activism has been focussed on the massive threat of war overshadowing us, here's a rundown of some of the actions which have been taking place to oppose war on Iraq...

Train drivers

January 8th: train drivers yesterday refused to move a freight train carrying ammunition destined for British military use in Iraq. Railway managers cancelled the Ministry of Defence service after the crewmen, described as "conscientious objectors" by a supporter, said they opposed Tony Blair's threat to attack Iraq. The anti-war revolt is the first such industrial action by workers for decades. The two Motherwell-based drivers declined to operate the train between the Glasgow area and the Glen Douglas base on Scotland's west coast, Europe's largest NATO weapons store. English Welsh and Scottish Railway (EWS), which transports munitions for the MoD as well as commercial goods, yesterday attempted to persuade the drivers to move the disputed load by tomorrow. Leaders of the ASLEF rail union were pressed at a meeting with EWS executives to ask the drivers to relent. But the officials of a union opposed to any attack on Iraq are unlikely to comply. The two drivers are understood to be the only pair at the Motherwell freight depot trained on the route of the West Highland Line.

Dockers went on strike rather than load British-made arms on to ships destined for Chile after the assassination of left-wing leader Salvador Allende in 1973. In 1920 stevedores on London's East India Docks refused to move guns on to the Jolly George, a ship chartered to take weapons to anti-Bolsheviks after the Russian revolution.

U.S. airbase at Mildenhall

January 6th: fifteen anti-war campaigners were arrested at about 11am after breaking into the U.S. airbase at Mildenhall, Cambridge. The campaigners were caught on the base's main runway after breaking through a perimeter fence. An MoD spokesman "In getting on to the site there was a breach of security" and they were detained by U.S. military police, who handed them on to the MoD. No charges were laid, but all 15 released on police bail to report back in 21 days. Mildenhall houses the U.S. Air Force's 100th Air Refuelling Wing giant. Its sister base at nearby Lakenheath houses U.S. fighter-bombers. The two bases are among the biggest U.S. airbases outside the United States mainland and are regular targets for demonstrations by peace activists.

Northwood military headquarters

22nd December: members of the London Catholic Worker were arrested and charged with criminal damage at Northwood Military Headquarters. Scott Albrecht, Angela Broome and Damien Prescott poured fake blood on the two main gate signs at Northwood in an Advent peace action. This action was done in protest at the impending death that awaits Iraqi civilians when the war kicks off. One of the protesters was a former US military officer.

Merry Christmas

19th December: Santa (actually an anti-war activist) appeared in court in Iceland to face charges over the exposure of Icelandic civil airlines' role in flying NATO weapons and troops to Iraq. The airlines, Icelandair and Air Atlanta, were said to have placed planes in standby to fly the materials if war is declared – a

step away from Iceland's traditional neutrality. The peace group involved had previously organised the first Northern-world flight through the Iraqi no-fly zone to bring medical supplies and Christmas gifts to Baghdad in 1997, and the organisation – Iceland Peace 2000 – had its subsequent flights cancelled and supplies confiscated. It has also had its internet access cut.

Glasgow University

December 17th: Glasgow Anarchist Students occupied the main lecture hall of the Adam Smith Building at Glasgow University. To protest against the war and to demand that the university cut all ties with the armed forces and the arms industry.

Menwith Hill

December 14; activists cut their way into Menwith Hill, the U.S. listening station in Yorkshire, and damaged over £100,000 worth of covert listening equipment. It is hoped that this will directly affect preparations for war on Iraq, as one of the base's functions is to help identify possible targets. There were no arrests, and although those involved stated that many of them had never done actions like this before they stressed that it was much easier than expected and that it was hoped that other people would be similarly inspired.

Weapons Inspectors

12th December: a delegation of 8 weapons inspectors from CamSAW entered RAF Lakenheath to confirm reports of weapons of mass destruction being held there in contravention of international law. U.S. Air force military personnel at the base failed to co-operate, but inspectors managed to enter the base, where they saw armed planes taking off and installations which are apparently used to store nuclear weapons. They hung a banner inside the base to mark it as a WMD site, and left unimpeded. The base was used during the 1991 Gulf war to bomb Iraq, and was used in subsequent bombing raids there as late as 1998. The base's website confirms that "NATO and U.S. leaders have asserted that if America is needed in this region, the 48th Fighter Wing [stationed at Lakenheath] will be called out first." Lakenheath is also the largest tactical nuclear bombing base in Europe.



Menwith Hill spy base, North Yorkshire



Fairford weapons inspection, December 2002

Recruitment Office

December 8th: the Armed Forces recruitment office in central Bristol was attacked. All windows were smashed, locks glued and walls splattered with blood-red paint. "NO WAR" was the spray paint message. Young people thinking of the armed forces as a career were called upon to contemplate whether killing innocent people is really a valid option. Also in Bristol, a woman arrested for breaking sanctions on Iraq succeeded in getting the court to admit that sanctions would be illegal if they breached the Geneva Convention. Nevertheless, she had costs awarded against her to the tune of £100, considerably less than the £1,000 demanded by the prosecution. For information on sanctions-breaking, contact: Voices in the Wilderness, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, London N1 9DX, 0845 458 2564, voices@viwuk.freemove.co.uk

Devonport dockyard

November 15th: protesters broke into Devonport dockyard in Plymouth and entered the trident submarine Vanguard. The action was part of an International Disarmament Camp at a nearby squatted Ministry of Defence complex. On November 18th the dockyard was blockaded.

Berkshire Citizens Inspection Agency

8th November – a team of inspectors from the Berkshire Citizens Inspection Agency visited the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston, where the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons are manufactured and maintained, to conduct an inspection of the site in an attempt to validate UK government compliance with international laws on weapons of mass destruction. As befits the CIA, the inspectors arrived in a white stretch limo and presented themselves to the MoD Police officers guarding the main gate. The police refused to let them in, and representatives from the management declined to meet them. No UN weapons inspectors have ever been known to visit the UK. The inspectors took soil and water samples from the area surrounding the base and then, in a spirit of co-operation, allowed the MoD Police to inspect their weapons - water pistols, a toy tank, plastic swords, and a six foot high model Trident missile. For more information contact 0118 966 8328

Propaganda

Posters highlighting the links between consumerism and the threat of war on Iraq can be found at: www.uhc-collective.org.uk/walmart/gallery2.htm

Happy Hallowe'en! national day of action against the war

Manchester

The day began with actions, rallies, road-blocks and demonstrations all over Greater Manchester. Students occupied the University Maths Tower for several hours; workers and supporters at a health clinic stopped traffic by repeatedly using a zebra crossing. There were noisy protests in Longsight, Salford, Stockport, Bury, Buxton, Bolton, Oldham and Rawtenstall. Meanwhile, Todmorden was "redecorated" by nocturnal artists armed with stencils and spray cans. There was also a ghoul-ridden critical mass and a rally from 'Out & Proud Against the War,' and an encouraging level of civil disobedience from all sections of the community, including a feisty bunch of young Muslim women very keen on blocking roads alongside the usual suspects. Finally, the main blockade on Oxford Road was met with police brutality, as horses were forced into the crowd, trampling people and backing up foot coppers as they threw people to the ground. The crowd won through in the end,

though, after students marching from their occupation drew the mounted police away.

Edinburgh

Protesters against the war dropped banners and took to the city's streets. During the main demo, which numbered approximately 2000, a sit down took place at a busy crossroads at rush hour, where people refused to leave the road and were dragged off by police. There was also a smaller (but noisy) Hallowe'en protest march in Glasgow, following on from a 15,000 strong demo on October 15th.

London

Pedal for Peace: a giant Critical Mass starting at the Imperial War Museum was greeted by the usual excessive policing. Staff at the Museum were comforted with a little friendly leafletting, before about a hundred cyclists, many in Hallowe'en dress, set off to deliver their 'Burning Planet' awards highlighting the unholy alliance of big business and governments behind the war. The first award, for Shell, was rolled between a copper's legs after none of the ungrateful staff wanted to come and receive it themselves. Other recipients were BAe Systems, BP, arms manufacturers GKN, Russian oil giant Lukoil, Lockheed Martin (the world's biggest arms manufacturer and operator of privatised welfare systems in the USA) and finally the Ministry of Defence and Houses of Parliament.

Women activists from all over the UK converged on central London at midday. They cordoned an area and blockaded a section of road to create an 'incident scene', complete with forensic 'experts' and incident boards to expose the illegal nature of the war machine. Police brutality ended their brief picket of Westminster Bridge.

Brighton

A Critical Mass from the university into the centre of town caused disruption to traffic for several hours. Despite a heavy police presence, it managed to meet up with several hundred more demonstrators who dodged the suspicious but stupid coppers and took over a major seafront roundabout at rush hour. The generally party atmosphere (kids, firebreathers, drums) notwithstanding, the police got out the pepper spray within minutes of people sitting down, and there were a number of arrests. But people still managed to move around, up side Streets and down alleys, and several more main roads were blocked during the course of a surprisingly active evening.

www.wmcnd.org.uk